A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 9, 1935

HOW MUCH EVAPORATION?

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Authority on Meteorology

The number of places throughout the world where evaporation from water surfaces is regularly measured is very small compared with the number of those at which rainfall is measured. In the United States, for example, there are several thousand rainfall stations operated by the Weather Bureau and other agencies, but fewer than a hundred evaporation stations, and most of the latter are west of the Mississippi.

So far as can be judged from the meager records available, water losses by evaporation range from a minimum of about 20 inches a year in the cool, damp northeastern and northwestern parts of the United States to a maximum of more than 80 inches in the hot, dry Imperial Valley of California. East of the 97th meridian annual evaporation gradually increases southward from 20 inches or less in the vicinity of the Great Lakes to almost 50 inches near the Gulf coast. Farther west complex mountains, basins and valleys cause an irregular distribution of this climatic element, but the Pacific littoral is characterized by evaporation of less than 40 inches, while the southwestern interior has more than 60 inches of evaporation in the average year.

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